

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 05348 221203Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----130922 221205Z /44

P 221029Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4512
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 5348

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SY, IS, US
SUBJ: KHADDAM CRITICIZES LACK OF U.S. REACTION TO ISRAELI
"ANNEXATION" OF WEST BANK

1. IN AUGUST 21 MEETING, FORMIN KHADDAM SAID HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED BY VIRTUAL TOTAL LACK OF U.S. REACTION TO RECENT ISRAELI MOVE TO ANNEX WEST BANK. (THERE NO OTHER WAY, HE ASSERTED, TO INTERPRET LAST WEEK'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT EQUAL SERVICES WERE TO BE PROVIDED TO WEST BANK/GAZA RESIDENTS.) HE CHARACTERIZED U.S. AS "SHY" TO TAKE ON THE ISRAELIS.

2. REPLIED THAT WE DID NOT CHOOSE TO GET INTO A PUBLIC CONFRONTATION WITH THE ISRAELIS ON THIS ISSUE AT THIS TIME. WE HAD SOUGHT EXPLANATION OF THEIR ANNOUNCEMENT THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS AND BEEN ASSURED IT WAS NOT A MOVE TO ANNEX THE TERRITORIES. OBVIOUSLY WE WOULD CONSIDER ANY SUCH ISRAELI ATTEMPT UNACCEPTABLE SINCE IT WOULD FREEZE PROSPECTS OF CONTINUING NEGOTIATION MOMENTUM.
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SUGGESTED THAT KHADDAM BE BRIEFER BY HIS STAFF ON WIDE-SPREAD EDITORIALS IN U.S. MEDIA CRITICIZING ISRAEL ABOUT ITS POLICY ON WEST BANK/GAZA SERVICES. THIS PRESS PLAY WOULD AFFECT AMERICAN PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPINION. AS FOR POSTURE OF U. S. EXECUTIVE, CARTER'S DECISION TO MEET WITH INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENTS DURING THEIR VISITS TO THE STATES NEXT MONTH WAS HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT.

IT DEMONSTRATED PRESIDENT'S INTENTION TO KEEP HIS PRESTIGE ENGAGED IN EFFORT TO MAINTAIN PROGRESS TOWARDS A PEACE SETTLEMENT. THERE WAS ALSO CARTER'S PUBLIC OFFER TO THE PLO TO OFFICIAL U.S. CONTACTS IF THAT ORGANIZATION ACCEPTED RESOLUTION 242. FINALLY, DEPARTMENT HAD CRITICIZED LATEST ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS. ALL FOUR FACTORS IN SUM ARGUED THAT NOW IS MOMENT FOR ARABS TO MAINTAIN FLEXIBILITY AND NOT COMPLAIN OF U.S. POSITIONS.

3. KHADDAM GROWLED THAT FLEXIBILITY AND MOVEMENT WERE EVIDENT ONLY ON THE ARAB SIDE. I REPLIED THAT ARABS HAD GIVEN NOTHING AWAY THEY COULD NOT RETRIEVE IF THEY FORUN THE PRESENT PROCESS LEADING NOWHERE. ADDED THAT ARABS IN TERMS WORLD PUBLIC OPINION HAD NEVER ENJOYED SO GOOD A POSITION. HE AGREED WITH THAT.

4. KHADDAM REVEALED THAT HE PLANS VISIT CAIRO PRIOR SEPTEMBER 3 MEETING OF ARAB FORMERS TO COORDINATE SYRO-EGYPTIAN POSITIONS.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ANNEXATION, WEST BANK, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DAMASC05348
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770302-0530
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770838/aaaabgde.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6e76fa56-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1531205
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KHADDAM CRITICIZES LACK OF U.S. REACTION TO ISRAELI \"ANNEXATION\" OF WEST BANK
TAGS: PINS, SY, IS, US, (KHADDAM, ABD AL-HALIM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6e76fa56-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009